

Lithuanians Resist Bow To Moscow

By David Remnick
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MOSCOW, May 19—The Lithuanian parliament showed general opposition today to the Kremlin's demand that the breakaway republic suspend its March 11 declaration of independence as a way of resolving its deadlock with Moscow.

The Kremlin has demanded the suspension as a condition for lifting economic restrictions against the Baltic republic and opening negotiations. Soviet President Mikhail Gorbachev repeated that position in his most recent public statements, making it clear that he wants Lithuania to recognize the validity of the Soviet constitution and the restrictive new Soviet law on procedures for secession.

When one legislator, Česlovas Jursenas, suggested fulfilling that demand today, he received no support.

The legislators appeared ready to suspend legislation aimed at implementing their independence declaration, but the Soviet government has said such a move would be insufficient and has threatened further pressure

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on Lithuania if it does not fully meet Moscow's demand.

A spokesman in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, said the legislature likely would consider proposals for concessions to Moscow and could vote as early as next week on suspending laws passed since the declaration. "The clear majority position is that there have to be some concrete moves toward Moscow," said spokeswoman Rita Dapkus.

Speaking in the Lithuanian parliament, the republic's prime minister, Kazimiera Prunskiene, said her meeting this week with Gorbachev had been a "breakthrough" even though he was still insisting the republic heed Soviet law and repeal the declaration. Prunskiene said that in a meeting with her on Friday, U.S. Secretary of State James A. Baker III had mentioned various possibilities for trying to get Moscow to the negotiating table, but she quoted him as saying, "How you do it is your business."

She said Baker mentioned the

possibility of "suspending" the declaration but appeared to understand such a move differently than Gorbachev. Baker said that even if the Lithuanians did suspend the declaration they would not be, in American eyes, bound by the Soviet constitution. She said Baker had told her that the United States had never accepted the Soviet annexation of the Baltic states in 1940 and would not do so now.

Asked at a press conference if he had pressed Lithuanian representatives to suspend entirely their March 11 declaration of independence, Baker said, "No, I did not press them on that issue. What I said was that a dialogue is important, because in my view only through dialogue are they going to achieve their hopes and aspirations for independence, hopes and aspirations, which I made clear we strongly support."

Baker said it was his understanding that that the "principal difference" blocking negotiations between Moscow and Vilnius is over what to do about the declaration of independence.

With less than two weeks remaining before U.S.-Soviet summit talks in Washington, the U.S. side seems eager to minimize, if possible, the role of the Baltic secession crisis on the meeting's agenda. Baker seemed anxious to walk a narrow path so as to avoid offending Moscow or to appear unsupportive of the Lithuanians.

"I made it very clear in our meeting that the course they would follow was up to them to determine and regardless of what that course was, they would continue to have the support of the United States as they have in the past 40 years," Baker said.

Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis said that it was "impossible" for the republic to suspend the declaration because it would, in effect, mean Lithuania had "re-joined" the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile the effects of Moscow's economic pressure on Lithuania worsen, with lines for gasoline growing longer. There is no hot water in Vilnius and factories are being asked to cut dramatically their use of electricity.